

THE FELLAHIN OF UPPER EGYPT

347 ~~Shops of different kinds are situated in the wider streets or lanes,~~
with open fronts which can be closed with wooden shutters when
the owners are away (Fig. 11). Through the open shop-fronts the
463 tailors are to be seen making *galālīb* (long blouses; singular,
[294] *gallabīyeh*) for their customers, and in some villages one may
[326] watch the coppersmiths manufacturing bowls and jars. The
vessels are hammered into shape over iron bars fixed in the
ground. The iron bar is bent over at a right angle at the top,
and flattened out so as to form a kind of anvil, on which the bowl
or other vessel is beaten into shape.



FIG. 11. A VILLAGE STREET WITH SHOPS AND BUTCHERS' BOOTHS

352 Benches of bricks and mud (*maṣātib*, singular *maṣtabeh*) are
461 found outside some of the houses, and on them is usually to be seen
231 a collection of children, fowls, goats, and even sheep, in happy prom-
188 iscuity. Or perhaps a *maṣtabeh* may be occupied solely by an
old man, spinning wool, or holding a rosary in his hand and slowly
passing the beads between his fingers and thumb (Fig. 12).

243 During harvest-time the swishing of the sticks as men and women
465 beat the grain from the bundles of corn which they have received
as wages for work in the fields,¹ resounds along the village streets.

314 The Yūsuf Canal (Figs. 4 and 13) flows past a village in which
823 I have frequently resided, and there is a good deal of folklore con-
755 nected with it. The water is believed to possess curative properties

¹ See Chapter X.

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If the land to be irrigated is much above water-level two or three of these *shawādīf* (plural of *shādūf*) are worked one above the other.

The men thus engaged usually sing at their task, some of their songs being very melancholy, and descriptive of their hard and laborious toil. One of them runs thus :

Shawādīf,

Their ropes are of palm-fibre

And their pails are of goatskins.

And it was in ancient times that *shawādīf* were
invented

By the blessed Ṣāliḥ Zabādi.

The ropes referred to are those by which the bucket is suspended from the end of the weighted branch which acts as a lever. The name of the supposed inventor is, of course, mythological.

The following is a lament on the hard labour involved in the working of a *shādūf* :

Hast Thou resolved upon strangling me, O God ?

Loosen the noose !

No mother weeps [for me],

No aunt,

No sister !¹

Another method of raising the water is by means of a water-wheel round the circumference of which pottery jars are attached. Another small wheel with cogs is attached to the same axis as the larger wheel, and into it fit the cogs of a large horizontal wheel. When this is made to revolve the two vertical wheels are set in motion. A long pole is attached to the horizontal wheel, and to it an ox, cow, or buffalo, or even a camel, is yoked and driven round and round by a man or boy. The animal is usually blindfolded to prevent it from becoming giddy. The groaning and creaking of the turning water-wheel form, to my mind, a most soothing sound.² Yet another contrivance for raising the water to the level of the fields is the Archimedean screw, depicted in Fig. 98.

During harvest-time every available man, woman, and child is employed in the fields ; but before any of the corn is cut some of the villagers go into the fields and pluck the finest ears by hand. These are plaited into a special form, and this object, called the

¹ See H. Schaefer, *The Songs of an Egyptian Peasant*, translated by F. H. Breasted (Leipzig, 1904), pp. 43 f.

² For excellent photographs of a *shādūf* and a water-wheel see *op. cit.*, pp. 45 and 107.

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‘bride of the corn’ (*‘arūset el-kaml*), is used as a charm. One may be suspended over the house-door as an antidote to the evil eye; another may be hung up in the room containing the stores of food, as a charm to ensure abundance. Many tradesmen hang such objects in their shop-windows, believing that this will bring them plenty of customers.

Again, in some parts of Egypt the ‘bride of the corn’ is temporarily placed on the heaps of grain after the winnowing is completed, as a charm to secure a good harvest the following year. Sometimes the grain from these heads of corn is extracted and mixed with the next year’s sowing. The ‘bride’ may be left hanging till it is replaced at the next harvest, or, again, it may be allowed to remain in its place until it falls to pieces (Fig. 99).

Before the field is cut a certain number of people are given presents of



FIG. 98. THE ARCHIMEDEAN SCREW

corn by the owner. These gifts of the firstfruits are bestowed on some of the poorest people in the village, as well as on the barber, the *mueddin* (the man who chants the call to prayer from the mosque), the *zummāreh*-player, the carpenter, and the *fukahā*—the last-mentioned being poor men who recite the *Ḳorān* in mosques, in private houses, at funeral ceremonies, and at the periodical visits to the grave (see pp. 112, 114 f., 117 ff., and Fig. 100).

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The corn is cut with a primitive sickle (Fig. 101), and is immediately tied up into small sheaves, which are carried to the threshing-floor on the backs of camels (Fig. 102). The threshing-floor is usually a bare place near the fields, and here the corn is piled up in great heaps.

The threshing is done with a sledge-like machine, called *nōrag*, drawn by oxen. It consists of a wooden frame, on which the driver sits, and solid iron wheels which are passed over and over the corn, breaking up the stalks and separating the grain from the husks (Fig. 103). The broken stalks are collected and packed into net sacks, which are carried off on the backs of donkeys (Fig. 104). The grain, which is, of course, still mixed up with chaff, is piled up in heaps ready for winnowing. This takes place out of doors, the grain being thrown up into the air with a large wooden fork or a wooden spade (Fig. 105). The wind carries off the chaff, the grain falling below in a heap (Fig. 106). A second process is necessary in order to clear the grain entirely of chaff, and so it is carefully sifted in large sieves. The grain is then piled up into heaps, over which palm-branches are sometimes placed to prevent the wind from blowing any of it away. The heaps are left standing all night, and late in the evening it is customary for the owner to place flat, round loaves of bread among the grain, these loaves being the perquisite of the man who, on the following morning, carries it to the owner's granaries.

The granaries are usually situated on the roofs of houses, and are made of clay or basket-work.¹

It is the custom to pay all the harvesters in kind (Fig. 107), and

¹ See pp. 153 f., 158.

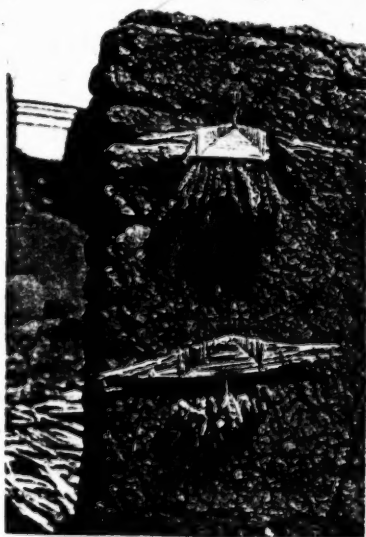


FIG. 99. TWO 'BRIDES OF THE CORN,' THE UPPER ONE NEW, THE LOWER SOME YEARS OLD

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243 strings of women and children can be seen coming from the fields
465 carrying their wages on their heads. The custom of paying in
kind is a very ancient one, and is not confined to harvesters only.

465 The village barber is also paid by his fellow-villagers in this way,
with beans and corn, and those who thus remunerate him can

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FIG. 100. A MUEDDIN RIDING HOME WITH HIS GIFT OF FIRSTFRUITS

501 demand his services for shaving and haircutting for a year. Only
465 those, however, of his own village can pay the barber in this
505 way; outsiders must pay him in cash. This rule applies also
to the ferryman, who, when the fields belonging to a village
lie on the opposite bank of a canal, conveys over the cattle and
labourers every morning, and brings them back just before sunset
(Fig. 108).

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In some parts of Upper Egypt the following customs are observed 243 ●
 in connexion with the cultivation of *dura* (maize) only. A *dura*-
 field is irrigated by means of a water-wheel or a *shādūf* ten times,
 and when the water has been conveyed to the fields for the last
 time the owner, or one of his family, brings to the field *faṭīr* (a 262
 kind of sweet pastry), or *kunāfeh* (fine macaroni), or *rashteh* 264
 (macaroni cooked in milk). He then
 stands on one of the pillars of the
 water-wheel or *shādūf* and cries to his
 neighbours in the field, "Come and
 eat," firing his gun at the same time.
 Such firing takes place regularly at
 weddings, or on any joyous occasion.
 After the food has been eaten the owner
 of the field plucks some of the heads of
 the *dura*-plants and places them on one
 of the empty food plates. This he pre-
 sents to whichever member of his family
 brought the food. He then returns to
 the field and plucks four heads of *dura*,
 which are fastened on the foreheads of
 the two oxen or buffaloes which worked
 the water-wheel. The animals are then
 driven home, and all who see them will
 know by the heads of *dura* decorating
 their foreheads that the irrigation of
 their owner's field of *dura* is finished.

When a *shādūf* is used for raising the
 water the owner plucks a head of *dura*
 for each *shādūf* that has been used for
 irrigating his field. The *dura* is attached to the arms (or levers)
 of the *shawādīf* which, like the cattle, are brought home thus
 decorated with the maize.

The last time of irrigating a field of *dura* is called *el-fiṭāmeḥ*,
 which means the act of weaning. The same name is given to the [853]
 last occasion on which a mother suckles her child.

In many of the provinces of Upper Egypt, when the *dura* or
 wheat or barley has been threshed the heaps of grain are left stand- [831]
 ing on the threshing-floor all night. But before sunset, when the [264]
 work is completed, the owner of the grain brings some food to the [789]



FIG. 101. A SICKLE

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

MR13, Fellahin MR13

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threshing-floor, either *faṣīr*, *kunāfeh*, or *rashteh*, or cooked meat. He stands up on one of the heaps of grain and calls out to his



FIG. 102. CARRYING CORN TO THE THRESHING-FLOOR

friends, "Come and eat," and he fires off his gun as a sign of joy. When his friends have eaten he places some of the food that is over



FIG. 103. THRESHING WITH THE NŌRAG

around and in the heaps of grain. This, it is believed, will bring a blessing and a plentiful supply of the grain; also, so the peasants

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

MR13 Fellahin MR13

Upper Egypt

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FIG. 104. CARRYING AWAY THE STRAW

believe, it will satisfy the 'afārit, who will eat some of the food thus placed for them. If the owner neglected to do this the 'afārit would take some of the grain.

This custom, as well as that mentioned before, of placing bread among the heaps of winnowed grain suggests a belief, at some period, in a corn-goddess, to whom offerings had to be made. So far as I have yet discovered there is no trace of such a belief left in the minds of the peasants, but these ceremonies certainly



FIG. 105. HARVESTING-FORK

suggest the possibility of an earlier belief in some fertility or earth-goddess, and the name given to the last time of irrigating a field (i.e., *el-fiāmeh*) bears out this idea.

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[Text continues on p. 180]

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243 In the chapter dealing with survivals it will be seen that some of these harvest customs can be definitely dated back to very early times in the history of the country.

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243 I have stated above that harvesters are usually paid in kind instead of in cash, and that the women and young girls carry these wages home on their heads. The methods of threshing and winnowing the corn received as wages are more primitive than those already described in this chapter. The threshing is done by beating



FIG. 100. THRESHING WITH A STICK

[415] with a stick (Fig. 109), and this process is often, though not always, carried out by the women. When threshed the corn is usually placed in a large, round tin bath, and the winnowing is done by simply taking up the grain in the hands and throwing it into the air (Fig. 110). The chaff is blown away by the wind, the grain falling down again into the bath. It then goes through a second process of winnowing with a sieve.

256 The grain, when required for use, is ground in primitive hand-mills, and "two women . . . grinding at the mill" is quite a common sight in Egyptian villages (Fig. 111). The stones from which these hand-mills are made are obtained, so I was informed, from the desert, and are chipped into the desired shape. The flour is very coarse after this grinding, and, moreover, after it has fallen

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

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FIG. 106. WINNOWING

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FIG. 107. A HARVESTER WITH HIS WAGES IN THE FORM
OF A SHEAF OF CORN

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leaf may be picked with them. When the pouch formed by ²⁴⁸ raising the lap of the *gallabiya* is filled, the worker goes to ⁴⁶¹ empty it in a clearing in the middle of the field, and then ⁴⁶⁴ resumes his place in the line. From the clearing an endless file of fellaheen carries the cotton to the storeyard (*shoona*) belonging to the owner or the bank. Thence, some time later, it will go on donkey or camel back to the ginning and pressing ^[744] factory, where from September to April, in an atmosphere of stifling dust, thousands of fellaheen, especially children, load and unload the ginning machines which separate and sort the seeds ⁽²⁵⁾. After a third picking nothing is left on the fields but brushwood. This is pulled up by hand, or ^[372] cut down level with the soil, then bound into bundles and stacked on the rooftops to be used as fuel.

B. The Poor Man's Bread

After cotton, maize is the most important crop, covering ²⁴³ about a million and a half feddans. Its introduction and general adoption are comparatively recent, though it became popular in Egypt before cotton, and was already well established in the Mameluke period.

In 1810 Sylvestre de Sacy wrote: "*Dura*, a large species of millet, is one of the commonest crops in Upper as well as Lower Egypt, and the people live in great part on bread made from *dura*."

Dura is the Arabic name for maize. The Ministry of Agriculture calls it *dura shamiya* or Syrian maize, to distinguish it from *dura eweiga* or *rafi'a*, the ancient millet.

Throughout Africa, wherever there is sufficient water and a rich soil, the different varieties of millet are giving place to maize, a cereal of American origin which is easy to cultivate, quick-bearing and favourable to a subsidiary crop. This is especially the case in Egypt. In fact the *dura rafi'a* is now planted only on about 300,000 feddans in Upper Egypt, where the basin irrigation system still holds, and is growing rarer with the advance of perennial irrigation. Maize has conquered the Nile Valley, because it has proved so suitable to the fellah and to the soil that it is reputed the world's best. Only that of Mozambique can compare with it.

The fellah sows it broadcast in July, gives it plenty of manure, and waters it seven times. Thirteen to fifteen

- 243 weeks later the stalks stand higher than a man and are laden with heavy ears. It is time for harvesting. The workers, mainly women and children, pile the stalks into heaps, and then make a first sorting, throwing on one side the ears of maize, on the other the stripped stalks. The yield of a maize crop may be ten or twelve *ardebs* to the *feddán*, but the average for the country is seven and a half.

The stalks are now set up on end and intertwined to make a sort of circular hedge round the heaps of ears. In this open enclosure the fellaheen work day and night to strip the ears and break out the yellow grain, bigger than peas, which they put into baskets and carry home. The stalks [342] are also taken home on donkey back to serve as fuel or [372] reinforcement for the roof. Nothing must be wasted.

C. Wheat

Wheat, on the other hand, has been since antiquity a traditional Egyptian crop. It is nowadays regaining some of the importance which it lost earlier to cotton, and is benefiting from the recent tendency towards greater variety of crops. In 1934 1,388,673 *feddans* were sown. In 1939 the area had increased to 1,466,000 *feddans*, which gave a total yield of 8,600,000 *ardebs*, or an average of 5.96 per *feddán*.

- [262] Almost all the wheat is consumed in Egypt, by middle-
[437] class Egyptians and the people in the towns. Owing to its low percentage of gluten and record earth-content it is barely exportable, though in 1937 Germany was negotiating purchases. Europeans and rich Egyptians prefer foreign flour, mostly imported from Australia or Canada.

- [312] The fellah sows his wheat in November. He pays great
[242] attention to manuring and watering up to the period of the *gaffaf*, after which he waters it only once or twice more before harvest. He harvests in April, with a primitive sickle or by hand. The crop is bound into sheaves and carried on donkey-
[492] or camel-back to the communal threshing-floor, where it is untied.

- Each family in turn spreads out its crop. The *gamoossa* is brought to tread out the ears of corn spread over the ground. The poorest of the fellaheen beat their corn with
[407] their staves (*nabbuts*). More often several of them share a

norag. This is a heavy wooden seat, supported on a rough chassis and moving on three axles armed with eleven solid sharp-edged discs for breaking up the straw. The driver sits in the chair and guides the *gamoossa* round in a circle over the ears so that the discs chop them up, while another worker throws fresh stalks under the machine. The *norag*, which is peculiar to Egypt, costs about L.E. 8. An even simpler variety without the cutting discs averages L.E. 3.

Winnowing is done, as in most Mediterranean countries, by throwing the chaff which contains the corn into the air in the direction of the wind, after it has been trampled and chopped up. For this the fellahs use a two- or four-pronged wooden fork, called a *garuf*. With one *norag* and several *garufs* they can deal with the produce of about 25 feddans.

Last of all the grain is sifted in large sieves by the women and put into sacks, jars or baskets, ready for sale.

D. Berseem

In summer cattle are fed either on chopped straw mixed with beans, or on barley; but in winter they live on *berseem*, an Egyptian species of clover (*trifolium alexandrinum*). *Berseem* is cultivated everywhere and covers a fifth of the total acreage, for it nourishes the ground as well as the cattle by absorbing the nitrogen from the air into the soil. It provides excellent forage, grows quickly and brings good returns for a minimum of work. The fellahs sow it between September and November, often after maize, cotton or rice, and before taking away the old stalks which serve to protect the seedlings. After fifty days or so it is ready for a first cutting, followed by four more at intervals of 35 days; the cattle graze on it as it grows. Two thirds of a feddan will feed a *gamoossa*, or a quarter of a feddan a donkey, for one season.

E. Other Food Crops

There are a number of other foodstuffs which are produced by the fellah's labour from the soil of Egypt. It will suffice to mention the most important.

Rice was brought from India under the Caliphs, and is cultivated in the well-watered regions of Damietta and the Northern Delta.

243 Northern Delta. It occupies about 6% of the cultivated area, but its acreage depends on the height of the Nile flood, and is controlled by the Government. Thus in 1935 there were 470,375 feddans under rice, in 1937 only 240,469, and in 1939 476,454. The rice is of good quality and can be exported.

241 Beans (*fúl*) provide fodder for draught animals, from June to December; those of the best quality, prepared with oil or fat, make a rich and popular dish.

Onions and sugar-cane are grown in Upper Egypt.

Then there are barley, lentils and dates, not to mention vegetables and fruits, the cultivation of which, although confined to certain localities, increases year by year.

The fellah keeps a narrow strip or corner of his field for his own use. Here, without using any manure, he plants the vegetables appropriate to each season: *bamia* in winter, *fúl* in spring and *molokhiya* in summer. These will be mentioned again in the chapter on the fellah's food. Apart from occupying much less space than other crops, they are cultivated in much the same way as the rest.

241 Egypt is becoming a land of variety in crops, but this diversity has not involved any sort of specialisation for the fellah. He is still a manual labourer, a "Jack of all trades", and his work remains simple and monotonous. There is not enough differentiation to form specialists of any kind, nor enough uniformity to limit his work to one dull task. This means that the fellah can adapt himself to any new crop. He will never introduce a novelty himself, but will take to it if encouraged by authority, the more readily if experience proves it to pay. This has been noticeable in the case of flax.

177 Mechanical innovations, however, are a very different matter. The preceding pages will have made it clear that there is never any question of tractors, reapers or binders, let alone winnowing or threshing machines, or even cars and waggons. Such machines as these are scarcely more common today than in the past. The fellah is too poor to use them, and in any case he feels no need for any instrument which would divide him from the soil. It is true that the large estates under direct cultivation employ extremely modern machinery, which is handled by fellaheen, but this is an

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465 the produce of the vegetable patch, or a present of maize.

The Fellah as Share-Cropper

427 As day labourer the fellah works on large properties, as
465 *métayer* or share-cropper on a small plot of five or at most
ten feddans. Under this system the owner enters into
partnership with the fellah as follows:

The owner pays the taxes and irrigation dues, provides the farm implements, cattle, seed and manure. The fellah, as head of a family, provides labour for all the year's crops, from ploughing to harvest. For this he receives a fifth or a quarter of the yield of his plot. He may also bear half the expenses, in which case he takes half the crop. The contract is always verbal, and varies in detail.

This system involves no risk as it guarantees the owner a maximum of work, and the fellah his livelihood. It cannot, however, be very profitable to the fellah, because even if he labours continuously with every possible aid from his family he cannot manage to work more than five feddans. At the end of the year he has only the produce of one or one and a quarter feddans, that is to say about L.E. 12, for the efforts of his whole family over twelve months. In a bad year he will have less to show even than this. Finding [426] himself short of money before harvest, he goes to the owner for an advance to buy a *gallabiya*, or pay the expenses of a circumcision or a funeral. Such loans, with their interest, sometimes come to more than his part of the bargain. In this case he will not only receive nothing when accounts come to be settled, but in addition his work will be already pledged for the following year.

The Fellah as Tenant Farmer

427 To rent land outright is more adventurous. The tenant takes a field at a fairly high rent, from L.E. 6 to L.E. 22 a feddan according to the district; he pays all expenses, but keeps all the produce. The owner is responsible only for taxes. The lease is long, and usually covers the full rotation of crops over two or three years.

For example a fellah of the rich district of Mit-Ghamr rents two feddans at L.E. 20 for the agricultural year. He [243] plants one with cotton, which produces 4 *cantars* ⁽³¹⁾, each [248] worth about L.E. 3½. The cotton goes to the owner, making L.E. 14 towards the rent. On the other feddan he sows

part *berseem*, and part wheat for the winter. The *berseem*⁴²⁷ is consumed by his cattle, the wheat produces 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ *ardebs*²⁴³, selling at about L.E. 6, but the landowner keeps back L.E. 4²⁴⁸ of this as the second instalment of rent.

The tenant then plants his maize for the *nili* crop on his two *feddans*, but before the harvest he must pay the balance of his rent (L.E. 2) to the owner, and can then take the maize for himself. In fact it is only the yield of this last crop which really belongs to the fellah and his family. After setting aside enough to feed his family, he sells what is left. If all goes well he may be about L.E. 6 to the good.

But all may not go well. If the crop has been poor, or⁴²⁷ there was a blight, or the crop has been badly sold, the tenant⁷³¹ must still pay the full rent, as provided in Article 392 of the⁶⁵⁶ Egyptian Civil Code. Ruin is the result. Sometimes (e.g. in the three years from 1929 to 1932) catastrophe has been so general that the Government has had to issue decrees for the reduction of rent in a proportion of 25% to 40% according to the date of contract. The State cannot always intervene, and owing to the keen demand land is rarely let except at high rents. The consequences for the fellah are frequently disastrous.

One unhappy tenant farmer, whose *gamoossa* had just⁴²⁷ been seized, explained the situation to an inquirer in these⁵¹¹ words:

"I hired two *feddans* at L.E. 12 apiece. On each I spent L.E. 5 in seeds, manures and so on, not to mention my labour, that of my children, and the help of my animals throughout the year. What is the result? One *feddan* yielded four *cantars* of cotton, which sold at L.E. 12. The other produced five *ardebs* of corn and seven of maize, which brought me L.E. 13. Out of this L.E. 25 I had already spent L.E. 10, so how could I pay my rent of L.E. 24? I had to sell the *gamoossa*."

"But if you only lose, why continue to rent land?"

"Because farming is the job I learnt from my fathers, and I don't know how to do anything else."

"But why rent land at such a high price?"

"Because the local landowners have conspired to keep the prices up, and the fellahs do not know how to get them lowered."

material is used, that is to say the nearest available earth. Thus large holes have been created, which have been dug deeper and wider, and have then filled up with water. These are the *birkas* or village ponds, which serve as drinking-troughs for animals, as swimming-pools for children, and sometimes as sources of water for the housewife. [311
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The Government has had fifty-odd of these hotbeds of disease filled in, not without meeting opposition from the fellaheen, whose habits and customs have thus been disturbed. Eighteen such ponds needed 10,000 cubic metres of earth. [164
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Not far from the *birka*, still outside the village, is the *gurn*, or winnowing and threshing-floor. This is a flat patch of ground covered with cow-dung and earth, which has been levelled and trodden down. Its size is proportionate to the number of families that use it. The *gurn* is common property, and nobody can appropriate it. It is big enough for ten groups to work at a time, until all have winnowed their corn. It also serves as a public square for meetings, though often an adjacent piece of waste ground supplements it for this purpose. Not far away can be seen a great rubbish heap made of dirt, dung and carrion. This heap would overtop the houses, if the dogs and birds of prey did not come regularly to reduce it, and if the fellaheen did not take manure from it. It would be an even greater danger to public health than the *birka*, if the sun did not disinfect it. [243
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Still outside the village, particularly in the Fayum and in Middle Egypt, there may be square towers, as much as thirty feet high, banded in black and white. Their heavy base, seven yards by four, gives them the appearance of forts, but they are in fact pigeon-cotes. You can see them assailed, at sunset, each by a cloud of from fifteen to twenty thousand pigeons coming back to roost after feeding among the fields. The construction of these "houses", requiring an outlay of from L.E. 200 to L.E. 300 each, is a specialised trade. It is beyond the means of our fellaheen, and can be undertaken only by an *omda* or big landowner. In the South a pigeon-cote is often built on a corner of the rooftop, thus raising the skyline of the village; but as a rule these houses with pigeon-cotes, whether built-on or independent, do not form part of the village itself. They stand apart, and can be distinguished by their extra storey, their more pretentious appearance, and their gardens. Such are the owner's villa on an *ezba*, or [231
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553 rite. Three rush baskets filled with different kinds of grain
852 are brought into the room. One supports the sieve in which
the infant is lying. When it is time for the bath, the mid-
wife shakes the sieve, as if to sift both the child and the corn.
Then she puts the grain back into the basket, wraps up the
child and sprinkles a few grains upon it.

853 The word *filāma*, used for the weaning of children, is
● 243 also used for the tenth and last watering of the maize. Sweet
431 cakes are given to the workers that day, as to the mother,
465 for it is the last day of suckling.

243 Harvest is always accompanied by symbolic acts.
777 Before reaping begins, the best ears are taken and plaited
789 into a kind of doll called the 'Bride of the Corn', which is
hung up in the house to bring good luck during the ensuing
year. Similarly, to bind the chain of life, the biggest grains
are mixed with the seed for the next sowing, and a few fine
loaves are slipped into the heap on the threshing-floor to
be winnowed and sieved.

782 Mgr Khouzam, reporting on his pastoral visit in Novem-
789 ber 1937, wrote as follows: "On entering their houses, I
blessed water, bread and corn. They drank some of the water
and used the rest to sprinkle themselves, their cattle and
their houses. The corn they flung into their fields. As for
the bread, I was made to break it and eat a little of it. The
rest they kept among their stores that God might bless
what they had laid by."

789 The joy of harvest shines also on those who have not
465 ploughed, but whose work in the village has benefited the
431 whole community. Tradition allots the first fruits of the
735 harvest to the reciter, the barber, the cantor of the mosque,
248 the schoolmaster and the carpenter. After these have
claimed their sheaves, the poor come to glean their share.
Cotton-picking, however, gives rise to no sort of ceremony.
This is perhaps because cotton has only recently been
introduced; or because it is grown for profit and not for
daily bread (").

245 The date palm, on the contrary, is as old as Egyptian
agriculture itself, and figures at all times in the life of the
people. They turn to this tree for shade and for roofing, for
beds and coops, for ropes and brushes. We have seen its

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●[243]

found in what we have observed in a small village in Central Delta. To thresh corn the Egyptians use a special cart or wagon with sharp-edged iron wheels which is drawn either by one or two animals. This implement is used since a very long time in Egypt. Some five years ago the peasants of this village—and probably in many places in the Egypt—can hire a tractor of a rich neighbour, and let the tractor pull three to five threshing waggons, one behind the other. In this way a work of a week done by the slow animals and one cart, is done in a day or two by the quick tractor and the triple number of threshing waggons. In a similar way mechanical ploughs can be used. The spread of mechanical ploughs would end, among others, in the following results:

1. Quick ploughing would result in relieving many working hands for other periodic wage-labour, increasing thus the private income.
2. Relieving the animals from a part of their hard work, thus enabling Egypt to develop animal husbandry and dairy production.

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